



THE
Oxford Methodists :

Being some ACCOUNT of a
Society of Young Gentlemen

IN
That CITY, so denominated.



[Price 6d.]

THE
Oxford Methodists :

Being some ACCOUNT of a
Society of Young Gentlemen

IN
That CITY, so denominated ;

Setting forth their
RISE, VIEWS, and DESIGNS.

WITH
Some Occasional REMARKS

ON
A LETTER inserted in *Fog's Journal* of
December 9th, relating to them.

*In a LETTER from a Gentleman near
OXFORD, to his Friend at LONDON.*



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS, at the *Oxford-Arms*
in *Warwick-Lane*. 1733.



A
LETTER

FROM A

Gentleman *near* OXFORD,

TO HIS

Friend *at* LONDON.

SIR,



H O P E you will not think me to blame that I have not sooner answer'd yours, wherein you inclosed *Fog's* Journal of the 9th of *December* last, and desir'd me to inform myself, and you, of the Motives, Pretensions, and Actions of the Society of young Gentlemen, there styled M E T H O D I S T S. As I was intirely unacquainted with any of them when you made me this Request, it must needs, you'll allow, take up Time, so throughly to make one's self Master of this Affair, as to be able to answer the Desire of so good a Friend, and so sincere a Man, as, without Flattery, I may say you are ; and so

B

that

that you may intirely depend upon the Account I should render you, and govern your self with regard to the Disposition you intend to make of the excellent young Man your Son.

THAT I might not be deceived, or give you a hasty or rash Account of the Practices or Way of Life of this Society, and as I have much Time upon my Hands, I took the following Method. I made a Visit to an intimate Friend of C—— C——, and he brought me acquainted with two or three Gentlemen of M——, who gave me a very dismal Account of the Society, and made me believe, at the best, that the Gentlemen who constituted it, were miserable Enthusiasts, and Zealots; and I found every one almost with whom I discoursed on this Subject, strongly prejudic'd against them. But after all, I could not hear the least Slur cast upon the Morals of the young Gentlemen; only, as the Letter-Writer in *Fog* lays to their Charge, That they pretended to be more religious than their Neighbours; that they put a gloomy and melancholy Face upon Religion, and affected greater Austerities and Exemplariness, than the Doctrines of the Gospel requir'd; and that some call'd them in Derision, *The Holy* or *The Godly Club*, others *The Sacramentarians*, &c. But, as I said, that very few call'd in Question either their Morals or Integrity.

AFTER I had heard all that could be said against them by their Enemies, I thought it was but fair, to enquire of their Friends what could be said for them: But, alas! so strong were the Prejudices against them, and so general, that I found it no easy Matter to meet with any one that would own the Name: ——— Whereupon, depending upon the Character which their Enemies gave

gave them, of Probity and Sincerity, I made my self acquainted with one of the Gentlemen, and frankly open'd my Mind to him, and desir'd him to inform me of their Motives and Views, and their particular Inducements to a Singularity of Behaviour and Life, which had subjected them to the Censures of so many Persons of Learning and Capacity. And from the Gentleman's Answer, and the Account he gave me of the Original and Design of the Society, I own I was greatly edify'd, and I doubt not, but you will likewise be much pleas'd. In short the Account which he gave me was to the following Effect: *viz.*

IN the latter End of the Year 1729, three or four serious young Gentlemen agreed to pass certain Evenings in every Week together, in order to read and observe upon the Classicks, and on *Sunday* upon some Book of Devotion. The following Summer one of these Gentlemen having called at the Gaol out of Curiosity to see a Man condemn'd for killing his Wife, told his Companions, that from the Talk he had had with one of the Debtors there, he verily believed it would do much Good, if a sober Person would now and then take the Trouble to talk to them. That upon his pressing the Matter, two of his Companions walk'd down with him to the Castle, and they were all so well satisfy'd with their Conversation there, that they agreed to go thither once or twice a Week. The Gentleman who propos'd this (who it seems is since dead) soon after desir'd one of his Friends to accompany him in a Visit to a poor Woman in the Town, who was taken sick: And finding their Advice well receiv'd, this induc'd them now and then to pass an Hour in such charitable Visits to poor People, who were taken ill: But lest Offence should be given to

the Minister of the Parish where such poor People liv'd, they thought it necessary always to apply to such Minister for his Consent and Approbation; and furthermore they apply'd to the Gentleman who had the Care of such of the Prisoners as were under Sentence of Condemnation, and who was Chaplain to the Lord Bp. of *Oxford*, for his Approbation of their Visits to the Prisoners, and of one of the Gentlemens Design of preaching to the Prisoners, once a Month, if his Lordship approv'd of it. The Gentleman, for his own Part, approv'd the Design, and undertook that the Bishop would do the same; and soon after signify'd his Lordship's Permission, and great Satisfaction in the Undertaking, and hearty Wishes for the good Success of it.

THE Gentleman assur'd me, That they were so diffident of themselves, especially when they found a Spirit of contemptuous Raillery stirr'd up against them on these Occasions, that they took Advice from time to time of a worthy and venerable Gentleman, a near Relation of one of them, who had much Knowledge and Experience of the World, and, that they might have nothing to reproach themselves with, form'd their Conduct upon his Advice; and upon the Encouragement he gave them, they were determin'd at all Events, to persevere in the laudable Course they had begun. He was so kind to shew me his Friend's encouraging Epistles, and oblig'd me with a Transcript of some Passages, which I was the more pleas'd with, as it gave me not only a Testimony of the becoming Modesty of the Gentlemen to submit themselves to the Opinion of a Person of Years and Discretion, (which took off from them the Imputation of Conceit and Self-Opinion); but as it gave me a high Notion of the

Piety

Piety and good Sense of the venerable Author. I will give you, Sir, the Transcripts as I took them. You'll find by the first, that the young Gentlemen had modestly intimated their Apprehensions of making Enemies to themselves by the Course they had enter'd upon ; for the old Gentleman says,

“ I AM afraid, lest the main Objection you make
 “ against your going on in the Business with the
 “ Prisoners, may secretly proceed from Flesh and
 “ Blood ; for who can harm you, if you are Fol-
 “ lowers of that which is so good ? And which
 “ will be one of the Marks by which the Shepherd
 “ of *Israel* will know his Sheep at the last Day ?
 “ And tho' it were possible for you to suffer a
 “ little in this Cause, you would have a Confes-
 “ sor's Reward.— Go on then, in God's Name,
 “ in that Path to which your Saviour has directed
 “ you, and that Track wherein I have gone be-
 “ fore you : For even when I was an Under-
 “ graduate at *Oxford*, I visited those in the Castle
 “ there, and can reflect on it with great Satis-
 “ faction to this Day — Walk as *prudently* as
 “ you can, tho' not *Fearfully*, and my Heart and
 “ Prayers are with you.

“ YOUR first regular Step is to consult with
 “ him (if any such there be) who has a Juris-
 “ diction over the Prisoners ; and the next is,
 “ to obtain the Direction and Approbation of
 “ your Bishop.

“ — I bless God who has given you Grace
 “ and Courage to turn the War against the *World*
 “ and the *Devil*, which is the best Way to con-
 “ quer them ; You have but one more Enemy
 “ combat with, The *Flesh* ; which if you take
 “ Care

“ Care to subdue (by Fasting and Prayer) there
 “ will be no more for you to do, but to proceed
 “ steadily in the same Course, and expect the
 “ Crown which fades not away.”

AND to the young Gentlemens Representation of the uncharitable Censures and Raillery to which they had exposed themselves, the venerable Old Man thus writes :

“ — THIS Evening, in our Course of Reading,
 “ I thought I found an Answer to yours, that
 “ would be more proper, than any I my self could
 “ dictate: Tho’ since it will not be easily trans-
 “ lated, I chuse to send it in the Original: πολλὰ
 “ μοι κἀνχυσίς ἕως ἡμεῶν πεπλήρωμαι τῆς παρεκλήσεως ὕπερ
 “ περισσάδομαι τῆς χαρᾶς — What would you be?
 “ Would you be Angels? I question whether a
 “ Mortal can arise to a greater State of Per-
 “ fection, than steddily to do Good, and for that
 “ Reason patiently and meekly to suffer Evil.
 “ For my Part, on the present View of your
 “ Actions and Designs, my daily Prayer is, That
 “ God would keep you *Humble*; and then I am
 “ sure, that if you continue to suffer for Righteous-
 “ ness sake, tho’ it be but in a lower Degree, the
 “ Spirit of Grace and Glory, shall in some good
 “ measure rest upon you. —

“ BE never weary of well-doing. Never look
 “ back; for you know that the Prize and the
 “ Crown are before you! Tho’ I can scarce
 “ think so meanly of you, as that you would be
 “ discourag’d with the Crackling of Thorns under
 “ a Pot. Be not *high-minded*; but *fear*. Preserve
 “ an equal Temper of Mind under whatever
 “ Treatment you meet with from a not very
 “ just or well-natur’d World. Bear no *more Saib*
 “ than

“ than is necessary ; but steer *steady*. The less
 “ you value your selves for these Unfashionable
 “ Duties (as there is no such thing as Works of
 “ Supererogation) the more all good and wise
 “ Men will value you, if they see your Actions are
 “ of a Piece : Or, what is infinitely better, HE by
 “ whom Actions and Intentions are weigh’d, will
 “ both accept, esteem, and reward you.”

THIS, Sir, you’ll own, is a noble Strain of
 Piety, that favours of the Primitive Pattern. If
 the Wise ones of the World account this Enthusia-
 siasm, let me, I pray God, at my last Hour, have
 no worse Reflexion to make upon my past Life
 and Actions, than will naturally result from having
 been guilty of such Enthusiasm as this ! How
 happy are these *Sacramentarians*, these *Methodists*,
 these *Enthusiasts*, as their Enemies call them, to
 have so very excellent a Director ! And how
 much are they to be commended for submitting
 their Conduct and Designs to so pious and expe-
 rienc’d a Judge !

UPON these Encouragements, the young Gentle-
 men continued to meet together ; and the better
 to confirm themselves in the good Course they had
 begun, they thought it requisite to *Communicate*
 as often as they had Opportunity ; which at
Oxford is once a Week ; and hence their Ill-willers
 gave them the Name of *Sacramentarians*. They
 continued their Services to the poor Prisoners ;
 visited such of their Acquaintance as were sick,
 and several poor Families besides in Town, and
 made Collections from the Well-disposed, and
 among one another, to procure Physick, and other
 Reliefs to the Bodily Necessities, as by their best
 Advice and Prayers they did to the Spiritual
 Wants, where needed ; and abridg’d themselves of
 some

some Diversions and Pleasures, in order to enable them to support the Expence which attended this good Courſe; and not, as the Gentleman aſſur'd me, from any melancholy Habit, or Gloomineſs of Diſpoſition, which this Method had brought them into: For, as he declar'd, Religion is a chearful Thing, and the Satisfactionſ they reaped from the Senſe of having perform'd what they took to be their Duty, however imperfectly, were greater, and of a higher Nature, than any they had ever before experienc'd. And this, Sir, no one can better account for than your ſelf, whoſe Life has been ſo eminently ſpent in a regular Courſe of doing good to all within the Compaſs of your Knowlege.

THERE are Three Points to which theſe Gentlemen think themſelves oblig'd to adhere, and their Practice of which, has brought upon them the Reproaches of all ſuch who have been wrought upon, by more relaxed Principles, or by Miſrepresentations of the Views and Actions of this little Society; for a large one I doubt, conſidering the Oppoſition they meet with, and the Depravity of the Age, there is little Room to expect or hope it will ever be.

THE firſt is, That of Viſiting and Relieving the Priſoners and the Sick, and giving away Bibles, Common-Prayer Books, and the Whole Duty of Man, where they find they will be well receiv'd, and explaining the Neceſſity and Uſefulneſs of thoſe Holy Books at all Opportunities, to thoſe to whom they give them; and to the Children of poor Families, they give and explain the Catechiſm, &c. and now and then for their Encouragement drop a Shilling, or ſo, where they think it needful and acceptable.

AND,

AND, 2^{dly}, in order to corroborate and strengthen these good Dispositions in themselves, they find great Comfort and Use, in taking the Opportunities which the Place gives them, as I intimated before, of a Weekly Communion.

AND, 3^{dly}, They observe strictly the Fasts of the Church: And this has given Occasion to such as do not approve of them, abusively to call them *Supererogation-Men*.

OBSERVING the Gentleman I talked with, and got these Lights from, to be a very modest and ingenuous Man, I threw in his Way two or three Objections to the Method they were in, in respect to the *Singularity* of the Thing, and wish'd their Zeal were not too warm and active, &c. But I found he was very well prepar'd to give solid Answers to what I said, and such as shew'd that their Notions and Principles were better consider'd and digested, than their Ill-willers generally imagine them to be.

HE said, They did not conceive that they did any thing that was not requir'd of them by the Duties of the Christian Religion: That the general Disuse of a Duty, could not by any Means excuse the Neglect of it. That 'twas true, they met with too many Discouragements, and more than they could have apprehended from the Disinterestedness of their Designs, and he enumerated some of them, from several Men of Wit in *Chr. Ch.* and *M——*; and that even some Gentlemen, noted for Learning, and in eminent Stations of Life, had descended to forcible Arguments and Menaces, to some of their Members, and had even influenc'd one or two of them, which had been great Matter

of Triumph to their gay Opponents: And even that a Meeting of the Officers and Seniors of a certain College had been held to put a Stop to the Progress of *Enthusiasm* in it, as they called it; and that it was given out thereupon, that the *Godly Club* was to be blown up: That all these Discouragements, however, had not at all dishearten'd the rest, and they were no otherwise concerned, than as these Ribs and Contumelies lessen'd the Influences of their good Design, thinking it, as he said, a small Matter to be judged by Man's Judgment: That as they conceived the Observation of these Points was their Duty, and requir'd at their Hands, they thought they ought by no Means to dispense with them; but that to such as were not of the same Opinion, and could not be prevail'd upon to think as they did, they preserved all manner of Charity: That they appealed to the Law and to the Testimony, by which he conceived they ought to be judged; and that if by them they could be proved in an Error, they would willingly retract it; but if not, that they had not so learn'd Christ, as to renounce any Part of his Service, tho' Men should say all manner of Evil against them, and that with more Industry, and as little Truth, as they have hitherto done: That if the Neglect of known Duties were to be the Condition of securing their Reputation, fare-it-well; they thought there was no Choice in so unequal a Competition.

BUT, however, he own'd, that they were not altogether so insensible as to be wholly unaffected with the Reproaches of the World, especially as many Reports had been given out of their Customs, &c. which had no Foundation in Truth; but that they were not concern'd so much for their own Sakes, as for the Obstruction it gave to their
good

good Design. And because the Relation in which the Old Gentleman I mention'd, stood to some of them, should not be thought to have made him partial to their Proceedings, and that they might not seem to rely too much upon their own Judgments, that they had laid open their Motives and Designs, and related the Discouragements they met with, and crav'd the Advice and Direction of a Clergyman as eminent for Wisdom and Integrity, as most private Men in the Three Kingdoms. As the Answer of this worthy Gentleman, who is no other, than the very Reverend may be particularly affecting to you in the Disposition of your Son, which was so great a Motive to you to put me upon this Enquiry, I obtain'd a Copy of it, which is as follows, *viz.*

Good Sir,

“ A pretty while after the Date, yours came to
 “ my Hands. I wav'd my Answer till I had an
 “ Opportunity of consulting who, upon
 “ all Accounts, is a more proper Judge of the
 “ Affair than I am: But I could never yet find a
 “ fit Occasion for it.

“ As to my own Sense of the Matter, I confess
 “ I cannot but heartily approve that serious and
 “ Religious Turn of Mind, which prompts you
 “ and your Associates to those Pious and Charitable
 “ Offices; and can have no Notion of that
 “ Man's Sense of Religion, or Concern for the
 “ Honour of the University, that opposes you,
 “ so far as your Design respects the Colleges. I
 “ should be loth to send a Son of mine into any
 “ Seminary, where his conversing with virtuous
 “ young Men, whose profess'd Design of meeting
 “ together, at proper Times, was to assist each
 “ other in forming good Resolutions, and en-

“ couraging one another to execute them with
 “ Constancy and Steadiness, was inconsistent with
 “ any receiv’d Maxims, or Rules of Life among
 “ the Members.

“ As to the other Branches of your Design ;
 “ as the Town is divided into Parishes, each of
 “ which has its proper Incumbent ; and as there
 “ is probably an Ecclesiastic who has the Charge
 “ of the Prisoners, Prudence may direct you to
 “ consult them : For tho’ I dare not say you
 “ would be too officious, should you of your own
 “ meer Motion seek out the Persons that want
 “ your Instructions, or charitable Contributions ;
 “ yet should you have the Concurrence of their
 “ proper Pastor, those good Offices would be
 “ more regular, and less liable to Censure.”

I WAS agreeably surpriz’d at the Circum-
 spection wherewith these young Gentlemen had
 proceeded, in this Affair, and was the more
 pleas’d with their Design as I found it a deli-
 berate Thing, and not the rash Effect of intem-
 perate Zeal, youthful Fire, or Self-Conceit, which
 might have push’d some Persons on to pursue
 these Methods upon false or inconsiderate Motives.
 And the young Gentleman acquainted me, That
 what had made them think it more necessary to
 submit to the Advice of such as they had Reason
 to think much wiser than themselves, was, the
 Anger that a worthy Gentleman conceiv’d at his
 Son, who was the chief Promoter of their Design,
 and who had writ to him in the following Terms—
 “ You can’t conceive what a Noise that *Ridi-*
 “ *culous* Society, that you have engag’d in, has
 “ made here. Besides the Particulars of the great
 “ Follies of it at *Oxford*, which to my great Con-
 “ cern, I have often heard repeated, it gave me
 “ sensible

“ sensible Trouble to hear that you were noted
 “ for going into the Villages about *Holt*, entring
 “ into poor Peoples Houses, calling their Chil-
 “ dren together, teaching them their Prayers and
 “ Catechism, and giving them a Shilling at your
 “ Departure.”

OUR Society, said the young Gentleman, might easily have borne the Reproach of being accounted Ridiculous for a Practice so laudable and inoffensive as this, had it not been the Sentiment of a worthy Gentleman who was the Father of a Person greatly respected by us both for his own, and his Son's sake : But it behov'd us, continued he, to proceed in the most wary and prudent Manner, when, join'd to an Authority so venerable as his own, he added as follows in his Letter.
 “ I could not, says he, but advise with a wise,
 “ learned and pious Clergyman. He told me,
 “ that he had known the worst of Consequences
 “ arise from such *blind Zeal*, and plainly satisf-
 “ fy'd me, that it was a thorow Mistake of true
 “ Piety and Religion. — He concluded with
 “ saying, that you was young, as yet ; and that
 “ your Judgment was not come to its Maturity :
 “ But that, as your Judgment improv'd, and on
 “ the good Advice of a true Friend, you would
 “ see the Error of the Way you was in, and think
 “ (as he does) that you may walk uprightly, and
 “ safely, without endeavouring to out-do all the
 “ good Bishops, Clergy, and other pious good
 “ Men of the present and past Ages.”

Y o u see, Sir, said he, when he read me this, we have no great Merit to attribute to our selves on the Score of our Circumspection, which was in a manner forc'd upon us by the united Censures of two so considerable Persons, and that soon after
 our

our setting out. He told me, with great Concern and mingled Resignation, That it had pleased God, to deprive them of the Gentleman to whom this Letter was directed, and who was the Original of their Design ; and spoke with great Honour of him, and Humility of themselves ; wishing, that they were as deserving as he, of some of those Titles that were, tho' in Raillery, bestow'd upon them ; and they should be well content, he said, that their Life too should be counted Madness, and their End thought to be without Honour : But the Truth is, continu'd he, our Title to Holiness, stands upon much less stable Foundations, as you will perceive when you reflect upon the Ground of this wonderful Outcry, which I have made you acquainted with, and which we are far from thinking comes up to our Duty, much less intitles us to reckon upon as Works of Supererogation, as our Opponents lay at our Door.

I TOLD him, that the World might perhaps have conceived the greater Prejudice against them, for want of knowing what he had so kindly acquainted me with ; and that I thought they should, in order to remove Objections, and the Occasion of Ill-Will, condescend to set forth their Designs and Motives to some of their most Learned and Candid Opponents, who being once set right, might influence others to think as favourably of them and their Conduct, as I did.

He said, They had not been wanting in this ; for that when they found the Clamour increase against them, that they might shew what little Ground there was for it, they thought it proper to propose to their Friends, and Opponents, equally, as they had Opportunity, these, or the like Questions ;

Questions ; which I got him to give me in Writing, as they explain their Conduct, and the Reasons of it, more particularly than has been hitherto mentioned.

I. *Whether it does not concern all Men, of all Conditions, to Imitate Him, as much as they can, who went about doing Good ?*

Whether all Christians are not concern'd in that Command, While we have Time, let us do Good unto all Men ?

Whether we shall not be the more Happy hereafter, the more Good we do now ?

Whether we can be happy at all hereafter, unless we have, according to our Power, Fed the Hungry, Cloathed the Naked, Visited those that are Sick, and in Prison, and made all those Actions subservient to a higher Purpose, even the saving of Souls from Death ?

Whether it be not our bounden Duty, always to remember, that He did more for us, than we can do for Him, who assures us, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me ?

II. *Whether, upon these Considerations, we may not try to do Good to our Acquaintance ? In particular,*

Whether we may not try to convince them of the Necessity of being Christians ?

Whether of the Consequent Necessity of being Scholars ?

Whether of the Necessity of Method, and Industry, in order to either Learning, or Virtue ?

Whether we may not try to Perswade them to Confirm, and Increase their Industry, by Communicating, as often as they can ?

Whether

Whether we may not mention to them the Authors, whom we conceive to have writ best on these Subjects ?

Whether we may not assist them, as we are able, from Time to Time, to form Resolutions upon what they read in these Authors, and to execute them with Steadiness and Perseverance ?

III. *Whether, upon the Considerations above-mention'd, we may not try to do Good to them that are hungry, naked, or sick ? In particular,*

Whether, if we know any necessitous Family, we may not give them a little Food, Cloaths, or Physic, as they most want ?

Whether we may not give them, if they can read, a Bible, Common Prayer-book, and Whole Duty of Man ?

Whether we may not, now and then, enquire how they have us'd them ; explain'd what they don't understand ; and enforce what they do ?

Whether we may not enforce upon them more-especially, the Necessity of Private Prayer, and of the Necessity of frequenting the Church, and the Sacrament ?

Whether we may not contribute, what little we are able, toward having their Children cloath'd, and taught to read ?

Whether we may not take care, that they be taught their Catechism, and short Prayers for Morning and Evening ?

Lastly : *Whether, upon the Considerations above-mention'd, we may not try to do Good to those that are in Prison ? In particular,*

Whether we may not release such well-dispos'd Persons as remain in Prison for small Sums ?

*Whether we may not lend small Sums to those
that*

that are of any Trade, that they may procure themselves Tools and Materials to work with?

Whether we may not give those, who appear to want it most, a little Money, or Cloaths, or Physic?

Whether we may not supply, as many as are serious enough to read them, with a Bible, and The Whole Duty of Man?

Whether we may not, as we have Opportunity, explain and enforce them, especially with regard to Publick and Private Prayer, and the Sacrament?

HE said, They never met with any Person, who answer'd any of these Questions in the Negative: But that they found several, who on this Explanation, and Expostulations thereupon, increased their little Stock of Money for the Prisoners, by subscribing somewhat Quarterly towards it. Nor did they find any one who entertain'd the least Doubt of its being lawful to appropriate to this Use that Time and Money, which might otherwise have been expended on the more fashionable Diversions of the Place: So that, concluded he, the more Persons we proposed our Design to, the more we were confirm'd in the Belief of its Innocence; and the more determin'd we were, of consequence, to pursue it, notwithstanding the Ridicule and Derision wherewith we were more and more loaded.

BEING thus abundantly satisfy'd in whatever I desir'd to know relating to this Society, after having made sincere Acknowledgments for his Frankness and Candour, I left the Gentleman and the City, not without assuring him of my hearty Prayers for the Success of their pious Designs, and for their Perseverance therein, and prudent Conduct amidst so many Opponents and

Gainsayers : Not forgetting to drop a small Largeſs towards promoting their pious and charitable Deſign.

G I V E me Leave, Sir, now to make a few Observations on the Premiſes, and on the Letter in *Fog's Journal*, which gave Occaſion to this Enquiry ; which has ended ſo much to my (as, I doubt not, it will to your) Satisfaction.

As to the firſt, I cannot but apprehend, that theſe young Gentlemen ſet out upon too ſtrict a foot, to gain a great Number of Followers, in ſuch an Age as this : But if they do nothing but what they look upon to be ſtrictly their Duty, who ſhall venture to condemn them ? By the plain Account I have given of their Proceedings, the Truth of which I cannot find diſputed by their warmeſt Opponents at *Oxford*, we perceive them to be well juſtify'd by the Rules of the Goſpel : And if this be the Caſe, it is no great Credit to the *Perſons*, or Compliment to the *Age*, that ſo great a Number treat them on the foot of Enthuſiaſts and Zealots. It looks as if the ſtrict Rules of primitive Chriſtianity were remov'd a great way out of Sight, that we are not able to behold the Attempt to revive them, without Wonder and Offence. The Letter charges them with obſerving *Wedneſdays* and *Fridays* every Week as Faſts. Perhaps this may be more than is requiſite ; but if *they* do not think ſo, where is the Offence, where the Crime, where the Cauſe for all this Clamour ? Have they not a Title to act with the ſame Freedom in their own Caſe, where none but themſelves can ſuffer, as any one has to differ from them, and to be of a contrary Opinion ? But what is ſtill more in their Favour, we find by what I have related, that they are not govern'd

govern'd by Caprice or Whimsy ; by their own Opinions and Fancies only : They have submitted their Conduct, and taken the Advice of Men of noted Piety, good Sense, riper Years, and Experience, and have had their Approbation and Prayers too in every material Step they have taken ; which is perhaps a Point, that if their Adversaries had known, they would have been a little more sparing of their Reproaches and Raillery, at least of that Part which lays to their Charge Opinonary and Singularity. The Knowledge of this, might have made them silent, and *reflect*.

As for the Letter which gave Birth to the Enquiry that has occasion'd these Lines, I will bestow a few Remarks upon it ; tho' I am persuaded, that, for the Writer's Sake, it were much better it were intirely forgotten ; for I am sorry to say, that it discovers a Want of good Sense, good Manners, and Christian Charity, and shews as much Zeal in a *bad* Cause, as those Gentlemen express in a *good* one.

HE compares them to the *Pietists* in *Saxony* and *Switzerland*, and to the *Essenes* among the Jews : By this he discovers his Ignorance ; and let him (for I have not Room, nor do you want, Sir, to be inform'd in this Case) recollect the Rules of those Sectaries, and compare them not with what he says is *thought*, but what he may inform himself *really* is, and what I have related to be these Gentlemens Method, and he will find the vast Disparity between them : He will find, that the *Methodists*, as he calls them, set up no *new Doctrines*, but only endeavour to follow such as they find already laid down in the Holy Gospel ; no *Rules* but what are conformable to that ; and pretend only to govern themselves by

Such Methods as they find prescribed to them in common with *all Christians*, and not which they themselves prescribe and impose on one another, as several new Sects have done with great *Singularity* and *Affectation*. Indeed, thus far perhaps they may be compared to the *Essenes* among the *Jews*; *i. e.* in the *Simplicity* of their *Diet* and *Regularity* of their *Life*; by which, as *Josephus* witnesses, (*cap. viii. De Bell. Jud.*) it was usual for many of that Sect to attain to an hundred Years of Age. And if it shall please God to give these Gentlemen the Grace to persevere, and the Blessing of so long a Life, they may be a Means of reforming a vicious World; and may rejoice in the Good they have done, perhaps *Half a Century* after most of their *Social* Opponents, the gay Scoffers of the present Generation, are laid low, and forgotten, as if they had never been. But you will agree with me, Sir, that the Letter-writer intended 'em not this fairest Side of the Comparison; but was willing to shew his Reading, tho' at the Expence of his Judgment and his Charity.

“ They avoid, says he, as much as is possible, every Object that may affect them with any pleasant and grateful Sensation.” I am sorry this ungenerous Writer is unable to judge of the pleasing and grateful *Sensations* (if one may use so low a Word for so high a Purpose) that arise from the Conscience, of having relieved the Miserable: What can inspire a nobler and more exalted Pleasure, than to see, by what is spared from our *Luxury* and *Superfluities*, the *Hungry* fed, the *Sick* relieved, the *Naked* cloathed, the *oppressed Mind* chear'd and made glad, the *Prisoner* enlarged, and the Mouths of even the *Profligate* taught to overflow with Praises, and

to sing Thanksgivings to that gracious Providence which has put it into the Hearts of these generous Youths to comfort and relieve them, both with regard to Temporals and Spirituals? Who can hear the lisping Children of the Poor taught to acknowledge the God that made them, and to instruct, by the Repetition, even their abject and untaught Parents in the principal Duties of the Christian Religion, without being affected with Joy and Transport, far exceeding that which results from the short-liv'd Pleasures which this grovelling Writer seems to esteem so grateful and pleasing? — I will venture to affirm, and I am sorry the Letter-writer is unable to judge of it, that there is more true and solid Satisfaction arising to a generous Mind, from the doing a kind and beneficent Action to his Fellow-creatures that want his Assistance, and languish in the Absence of the common Comforts of Life, than from all that can be found from the most affecting Pleasures of Sense. He knows nothing of the Seraphick Pleasure of having cheared the drooping Spirit, and comforted the desponding Heart; a Pleasure, which makes the Eye of the generous Man to glisten with Joy, and his enlarged Heart to bound in his Bosom, and overflow in Praises to the Divine Power, which has enabled him to do the Good he rejoices in. — How falsely, how perversely are such Persons as these call'd *Sons of Sorrow*, and Men who *doom themselves to an absurd and perpetual Melancholy!* Or rather, how much are these Scoffers to be pitied, who cannot rise to a Capacity of comprehending the ecstatick Pleasures which hourly fill the Minds of those they so rashly condemn! and which are inseparable from the Consciousness of having done some Part of the Duty required of them by the Author of their
 Being,

Being, in Acts of Beneficence to their Fellow-Creatures.

HE proceeds ; “ All *social* Entertainments and Diversions are disapprov’d of.” How can that be, when they themselves are a *Society* ; and the Diversions and Entertainments which they chuse, are of the noblest Nature, and must be heighten’d by *Communication* ? But may we venture to judge what the Letter-writer means by *Social Entertainments* and *Diversions* ? — Are they not those of the *Social Bottle*, and what flows from the Company and Conversation of Persons of such a ludicrous Turn of Mind as his own ? But let him remember, that every one is not *entertained* or *diverted* alike. One Man may think very meanly of that, which is the highest Gratification to another, as this Writer finds in the present Case. I will answer for it, that these Gentlemen think they enjoy all *Social Entertainments* and *Diversions* in as high a Degree at the least, as the Letter-writer, tho’ perhaps they would not care to take ’em at his *Choice*, and ’tis likely could not in his *Company*. — They think it, doubtless, a great Pleasure, to save Money from such *Social Entertainments* and *Diversions* as he speaks of, to bestow on the much more noble Purposes, which the Letter-writer disapproves, ridicules, and does his utmost Endeavour to disparage, and render ineffectual ; and this, without Provocation, for his *Entertainment* and *Diversion* only. A noble Diversion, truly ! to sport with the Reputation of others, and to ridicule the good Intentions of Persons it would much better become him to endeavour to imitate.

“ AND

“ A N D in endeavouring to avoid Luxury,
 “ *pursues he,* they not only exclude what is con-
 “ *venient;*” that is, what the *Letter-writer*
 thinks *convenient*; but what these Gentlemen per-
 haps think *superfluous*: And who is the properest
 Judge in this Case; *he for them,* or *they for them-*
selves? — But if they are *not* superfluous in
 the Esteem of either, suppose they think they are
 what they *can,* and therefore *ought* to do without,
 for the sake of supplying with *Necessaries* those
 who are in *actual Want?* ought they, for this,
 to be made the Subject of licentious Raillery? —
 “ They not only exclude what is *convenient,* but
 “ what is *absolutely necessary* for the Support of
 “ *Life.*” Absurd Railer! how then do they
 live, if they deny themselves what is *absolutely*
necessary for the *Support* of *Life?* — But
 ’twill be said, this Expression is to be taken with
Allowance: But shall he be intitled to *Allowance,*
 who makes *none,* where all manner of *Allowances*
 are *due?* And where the *best Intention* must, at
 least, be granted, and his acknowledged the *worst,*
 that of *ridiculing* Acts of *Piety* and *Charity?* —
 He goes on; — “ *Fancying (as is thought)*”
 shameful Parenthesis! which shews the base and
 mere conjectural Foundation of all his Charge!
 “ that Religion was design’d to contradict Na-
 “ *ture.*” They can think or fancy no such thing;
 but they think and are *assured,* that *Religion,*
 the *Christian* Religion, induces to much higher
 Purposes, than those of *mere Nature,* and that it
 is capable of *exalting* Nature. He adds; “ They
 “ neglect and voluntarily afflict their Bodies, and
 “ practise several rigorous and superstitious
 “ Customs, which God never required of them.
 “ All *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* are strictly to be
 “ kept as Fasts, and Blood let once a Fortnight to
 “ keep down the Carnal Man,” *says this aban-*
don’d

don'd Droll. — But let us proceed with his barbarous and ill-tim'd Levity ; and let the Repetition of it make the Scoffer blush, if he be capable of it : “ And at Dinner, they sigh for “ the Time they are obliged to spend in Eating : “ Every Morning to rise at Four o' Clock, is “ suppos'd a Duty ; and to employ two Hours “ a Day in singing of Psalms and Hymns, “ (*dreadful Charges these, were they true!*) is “ judg'd as an indispensable Duty requisite to the “ Being of a Christian. In short, they practise “ every thing contrary to the Judgment of other “ Persons, and allow none to have any, but “ those of their own Sect, which (*says this “ Round Asserter*) is farthest from it.” — Half this Censure, tho' from a profess'd Enemy, is real Praise ; and the rest is so contrary to Truth, such shameful and ludicrous Banter, and is so sufficiently contradicted by what I have related, that the farther Notice of it is entirely unnecessary.

THE Pattern which he says they propose to take from *Origen*, and the whole Paragraph thereupon, is too foolish and absurd to merit Observation ; but only as it serves to shew what manner of Spirit this Writer is of, and that he has not, if one may judge by *that* and *another* virulent Hint he gives, a Capacity sufficient to qualify him so much as for a tolerable Buffoon. This abominable Hint is a Mark of the most detestable Spirit of Calumny and Detraction that was ever seen ; and I would refer it to the Conscience of the Writer, since he can thus stab in the Dark, and dares not fix his Name to the horrid Scandal, how he would be content to bear this Sort of Usage himself. By such a Spirit as this Man's were the first Opposers of Christianity acted. Their Enemies reported, that the Primitive Christians were guilty of Incests,
and

and the most abominable Pollutions, in their Assemblies: That they kill'd and ate young Infants, &c. And let *both Parts* of the Parallel have due Force; this Detractor's, to that of the *malignant Heathen*; theirs, to the *innocent and stigmatized first Christians*; to which both bear so near a Resemblance.

BUT hear another Instance of the Absurdity and Folly of the Letter-writer: "Some, says he, are apt to ascribe their gloomy and disconsolate Way of Life, to want of Money; thus being deny'd the Enjoyment of those Pleasures they chiefly desire, they are weigh'd down by an habitual Sorrow." Was ever any thing more absurd? — Their gloomy Way of Life, is owing to *want* of Money, and therefore they *throw it away*, (as this Author would be thought to reckon it, in good Books, *Bibles, Catechisms, Whole Duty of Man, &c.*) and give it to the Poor, to the Prisoners, to the Sick, &c. The Matter of Fact is, *First*, They do not think their Way of Life either *disconsolate* or *gloomy*; but as Religion itself, as is before observ'd, is the most chearful thing in the World, both as to Cause and Effects, so they enjoy so happy a Serenity of Mind, that even the undeserved Calumnies of such an Adversary, and the unprovoked Ill-treatment of their more significant Opposers, cannot disturb it; tho', as far as I can find, they would be glad to be otherwise thought of. *Secondly*, They have a constant Enjoyment of those Pleasures they *chiefly desire*, and are under no other Concern, than that they have not a Capacity as large as their Inclinations, to do still more Good to those that want it. And, *Thirdly*, They are so far from being *weigh'd down* with an *habitual Sorrow*, that he himself accuses

E

them,

them, in another Place, of bestowing two Hours every Day in singing Psalms and Hymns to the Almighty ; which, no doubt, if they do, is from a chearful Sense of the Blessings He heaps upon them, and for influencing them by his Divine Grace, to do all the Good which is in their Power. And this, according to this Writer, is to be *weigh'd down by an habitual Sorrow.*

HE thinks ; yes, even this Detractor thinks, it would be too presumptuous to tax their Character with *Hypocrisy* : 'Tho' he absurdly makes this Concession introduce the vile Insinuation I have hinted at, and which is really too shocking to be repeated.

As to the Character into which he resolves the Matter at last, to wit, of *Enthusiastic Madness*, of *superstitious Scrupulousness*, of *Folly*, &c. that has been taken notice of already in the Course of the Narration, and I shall say nothing to it here. They must be content to tarry for a better Character from such Persons as this Writer, till Time, and their own continu'd good Conduct, and Perseverance in the same laudable Duties, have worn off the Imputation, and given the World a better and juster Opinion of them.

BUT after all, Sir, between Friends, I cannot help saying, that I wish these young Gentlemen have not, at their first setting out, fallen upon too great a Refinement in some small Points, which their Friends might have wish'd, that proper Regard to the Censure of the World, (which is so necessary to augment their Numbers, and to prevent Ridicule) had made them avoid. I am entirely satisfy'd with their Scheme in general, and think it worthy of a more primitive
Age ;

Age ; but if the dispensing with such Points, if there are any such, as they in Conscience think might be dispensed with, would have taken away the Occasion of any Part of that Obloquy, which a misjudging World is so ready to fix upon all good Designs, I wish they had done it ; that they might have had less Difficulties to encounter, and more Hopes of Success in propagating so worthy a Scheme : And I conceive the Apostle's Example about *Meats*, would have very well borne them out, who became *all Things to all Men, that he might gain some*, and accommodated himself in all lawful Matters both to the *Jews* and *Christians*. But if the Imperfection of human Nature be such, that we *must* do *too little*, or *too much* ; that to abate of the Fervour of that Zeal which excites to Actions thus laudable, would be to damp their ardent Flame, and make them relax too much, let 'em proceed, and keep high-tun'd and unabated that divine Energy of Mind which shall, in God's good Time, transport them to a blessed Eternity, where all is Harmony, Peace, and Concord.

BUT to return one Moment to this Writer ; We find his Charge, in the main, of the same Nature with that of the angry Gentleman above-mention'd to his Son, who makes their Virtues their Faults ; *viz.* " That the young Gentleman
 " frequently went into poor Peoples Houses, call'd
 " their Children together, instructed them in
 " their Duty to God, taught them their Prayers
 " and Catechism, and gave them Money, &c. " This indeed, to our *modern* Christians, who place all Religion, as well as *Prayer*, in a dead Indifference, cannot but seem extremely odd and strange. But to those, who but look into the *Bible*, or have ever dip'd into *Cave's Primitive*

Christianity, it will, at first Sight, appear plain, to a Demonstration, that the *Method* practised by those young Gentlemen, is but a *Revival* of that good old Way which was practised by the best People of the first Ages ; or rather, that it is the very same Path, which their great Master has pointed out, to bring them thither ; narrow indeed, and streight, but most assuredly tending to Life.

I NEED make no Reflection on the particular *Unseasonableness* of making such an Outcry against [a supposed Excess in] Religion at *this* Time, when the World is running into the very opposite Extreme, of crying-down the very Shew and Appearance of it. Can they be Friends to the *Thing* itself, who raise greater Camours at a *Zeal for Religion* (whatever Indiscretion there may be supposed) than at all the horrid and barefaced Insults of *Blasphemy* and *Profaneness* ?

IF we suppose Indiscretion in some Part of these young Mens Conduct ; How can it well be otherwise, in the first setting out ? Perfection is a Work of Time and Experience. But where might we expect proper Help and Direction for young Beginners, if not at *Oxford* ? Surely the Letter-writer could not have contrived a more effectual Way of Exposing that Learned Body, than by referring the Case of these young *Methodists* to Mr. *Fog's* Correction, and to leave the World to suspect there is not Skill or Judgment enough in any of those grave Doctors, and professed Guides of Youth, to rectify any mistaken Methods (if any) in their Practice, or Devotions.

I HAVE heard, that a celebrated Head of one of their Colleges was wont to deliver it as his Opinion, That no Lad ever made a bright and ingenious Man, who had not run into some extravagant and vicious Excesses in Youth. — Why may not the same Rule hold in Spirituals? *Zeal*, in itself, is doubtless a laudable Disposition of Mind, especially if it be in a good Thing. If in *Religion*, (than which, nothing can be more excellent) it answers to that generous Ardour and lively Pregnancy in Youth, which puts them on enterprizing great and magnanimous Actions. For want of Experience, indeed, it may run into some Extravagance and erroneous Excesses, and too often miscarries either in those *Depths* it unwarily adventures to rush into, or on those *Shelves* and *Rocks* it wants Skill to discern and avoid.

THIS shews how necessary it is that *Zeal* should ever be attended with *Knowledge*: So *Religion* speaks of herself; — *I Wisdom dwell with Prudence*, Prov. viii. 12. This Sentiment also carries in it a double Advice: Not only to *Novices* and *Beginners* in a Religious Course, that they ought to put themselves under the Conduct and Direction of some Knowing Guide, but likewise to those who pretend to be Guides, that they should apply their better Skill, not to extinguish the *Zeal* itself, but only correct its Mistake; — to *make straight Paths for their Feet, lest that which is lame and imperfect be turned out of the Way, but let it rather be healed.*

WHAT I have related, will shew, that these young Gentlemen have proceeded with great Prudence and Caution, in observing the above Advice,

Advice, as far as it concerns themselves. I wish I could say the same of their Opponents, or of those rather whose more immediate Part it is to *pilot* them aright, and that they would not countenance the Insults cast upon so hopeful a Scheme, and thereby *break the bruised Reed, and quench the smoking Flax.*

'Tis not to be question'd, but most of the Clamours rais'd against this Society, are owing to Misapprehension and Misrepresentation. The Duties they practise, and the Good they do, and are inclin'd to do, must proceed from Motives that cannot deserve these Clamours, or to be discountenanc'd or ridicul'd. Bad as the Age is, there are not wanting, blessed be God, even among the Many, enow to admire and applaud, if not so strictly as they ought, to practise, what is laudable in itself, when it appears to be so to them. Were the Rules, by which these young Gentlemen are acted, known as well to the World, as they are to me, in Virtue of the Enquiry I have made, other Thoughts would be conceived of them by all serious Men, and by such as have not a strong Taint of Scepticism and Infidelity, and are not bad, if one may so say, upon Principle. Let such make an Abstract of the Narration I have given, which I solemnly declare, upon the strictest Examination, I believe to be the Truth, and let them hate or oppose them if they can. They will find the Matter thus come out, (*to sum up briefly what has been already said*), That this Society think themselves oblig'd in all Particulars, to live up to the Law of the Gospel. That the *Rule* they have set themselves, is not that of their own Inventions, but the *Holy Scriptures*, and the *Orders and Injunctions of the Church*; and that not as they perversely construe and misinterpret

interpret them, but as they find them in the holy *Canon*. That, pursuant to these, they have resolv'd to observe with Strictness, not only all the Duties of the Christian Religion according to their Baptismal Engagements, but the *Fasts*, the *Prayers*, and *Sacraments* of the Church; to receive the blessed Communion as often *as there is Opportunity*; and to do all the Good they can, in visiting the *Sick*, the *Poor*, the *Prisoners*, &c. knowing these to be the great Articles on which they are to be try'd at the Last Day; and in all Things to keep themselves unspotted from the *World*. It would be found, that, if they rise earlier than ordinary, if they are sparing in *Eating* or *Drinking*, or any *expensive Diversions*, 'tis to save *Time* and *Money* for improving those glorious Ends; and not (as is unfairly insinuated) that they make *such Things* to be *Essentials* in Religion, much less out of a gloomy and *Pharisaical* Spirit, to shun the Company, or upbraid the Practice of others. — These are the *Rules*, this the *Method* they have chosen to live by.

LET all the *serious* Part of Mankind, who alone are appeal'd to in this Case, be Judges between them and this lewd Detractor, who has so ludicrously, and, in some Cases, so wilfully misrepresented them. To *live by Rule*, especially a good Rule, was ever esteem'd a sure Sign of *Wisdom*: To *live by none*, much more to be *against all Rule and Method*, must be a flagrant Mark of *Folly*: And therefore no Man, as it seems to me, has a better Title to the Prescription of *Dr. Wilis's Wonderful Cap*, than the Letter-writer and his Abettors. And I will venture to add, That if these young Gentlemen persevere to
the

the End in this *good Method*, instead of the *Cap* of Shame and Reproach, they shall receive a *Crown* of Glory.

I HOPE, Sir, you will excuse my Prolixity: You say, you love to receive long *Letters* from me; and I think I have now try'd your Patience sufficiently, and that Indulgence with which you have always favour'd

Your most humble Servant, &c.

F I N I S.

